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'My Heart Was in Little Falls': Even After 1,000 Shots Faced, Izaak Kalis is Glad He Returned to High School Hockey

Kalis had an opportunity to leave the Flyers to play in the NAHL, but he chose to wear purple and white for his senior season

Jack Butler | Feb 15, 2026

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Little Falls boys hockey senior goalie Izaak Kalis and senior forward Beau Majerle were born one day apart in the same hallway in the hospital. They grew up with each other, and they tried out for Little Falls hockey together back in the ninth grade.

But last summer, Kalis was set to forgo his senior year to pursue his dream of playing college hockey and play for the St. Cloud Norseman in the NAHL. As the school year approached, Kalis wasn't confident in his decision, and Majerle was hopeful he might change his mind to play with his senior class for one final season.

In September, Majerle and head coach Joey Hanowski were at Exchange Arena running a youth skate. Kalis was there as well. He did not have a helmet, so he asked if he could use one of the team's.

Hanowski replied, "You can only use that if you're coming back."

Kalis was quiet for a moment. He said, "I'll tell my dad tomorrow."

"He put on the helmet and gloves and came out and skated with us," Majerle said.

That was the moment Majerle found out his friend was returning, and Kalis went on to ...or the team throughout a difficult 2025-26 regular season. The Flyers have a 6-19

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business, right? You've got to perform, and it doesn't really have that community based feel like high school hockey does."

With the regular season over, he has faced 1,107 shots on goal in 25 games, the second most in Minnesota. He has a .922 save percentage and a 3.51 goals against average with two shutouts. He recently passed 3,000 career saves.

The Flyers faced Luverne in the opening game of the season, and it was an introduction to what was ahead. Kalis faced 67 shots on goal, saved 65 of them, and the Flyers lost 2-1 in overtime.

"It was the first period of the year, and it was like, 'Wow, I'm on pace to see 90 shots,'" Kalis said. "I don't know if I can do that, and I was super tired."

Kalis returned despite the knowledge that the Flyers were going to field an inexperienced team. Many of his teammates in key roles are playing their first season of varsity high school hockey.

"It's been hard," Majerle said. "We have a lot of new guys adapting to their role and getting a lot more minutes, and it was pretty tough for us to start off with. It's been disappointing, but it hasn't recently. I think we've been playing really hard and taking good steps toward the right direction."

The Flyers biggest struggle is in the offensive zone. They've been shut out six times so far this season, so the pressure is on Kalis to keep the puck out of the net to give the Flyers a chance to compete. He knows it, and there have been multiple times this season when he has faced over 50 shots in a game.

"Sometimes it gets hard when you're looking at the scoreboard and you're exhausted," he said. "If I see 45 shots in the game, that's what I want to see. But then, when the

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After the game, in the locker room, he told the team to keep their gear on because they might condition.

"He wanted to go skate because that performance wasn't good enough," Majerle said. "He shouldn't have to do that. He gave it all for us that game. That was pretty cool to see him wanting to get better."

Kalis has spent the past two summers preparing to face tougher competition. He trained with Edge Goaltending in Fargo with players aspiring to play Division I or Junior hockey. Kalis' athleticism is his strength, but his summer training has helped refine his technical skills and poise.

"I want to keep up with them," Kalis said. "That's the level I want to play at, so I think it was good for me to have that competition."

The Little Falls hockey program has also invested in Kalis. It added a goalie coach, and Kalis uses virtual reality training to keep him rested but mentally sharp after physically demanding games. Joey Hanowski was a former skater for the Flyers, so his technical advice to his goalie is limited. But he was also a former captain and comes from a family synonymous with Little Falls hockey.

"There's sometimes I will step in just from being in his shoes of feeling pressure in this program," Joey Hanowski said. " I'm just telling him, 'Hey, you can't do it all yourself. [...] When you try to do more, when you're struggling, you actually get worse.'"

Four college jerseys and one professional jersey of Little Falls boys hockey alumni hang in Exchange Arena. Two belong to Joey Hanowski's brothers, Beau and Ben, who played St. Cloud State and the Calgary Flames, respectively. Joey Hanowski can speak on the Rushmore" of Little Falls hockey players, and Kalis is motivated by legacy. Joey

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record or a strong strength of schedule. The Flyers are not considered Class A contenders.

"I know it's gonna play a factor, but that's another thing that's out of my control," Kalis said. "So I'm just trying to do what I can with what I have. And I think to win it coming out of here would be an even greater honor than winning it out of a huge AA high school."

Kalis needs to continue to play well if Little Falls is to make a push in the Section 6A playoffs, and the Flyers feel as if they're playing better as the section playoffs begin.

"The season might not be going that well, but you have that goalie who can win you one game in the playoffs," Majerle said. "[Kalis] is the kind of goalie who can steal a game against a good team."

They open the Section 6A playoffs as the No. 4 seed, and they will play Prairie Centre Area on February 17. Now, one loss means elimination and the end of the season. Whatever that day is, it will be the last time Kalis will play for the Flyers, but he's glad he did.

"The idea of leaving my buddies just kind of made me sick," Kalis said. "[...] My heart was in Little Falls, and I don't think I can ever leave that behind."

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